

VZCZCXRO0741  
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHRL #0303/01 0701912  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 101912Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0654  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000303

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MAR](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [GM](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: GERMANY/RUSSIA: MEREL GOES TO MOSCOW

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Chancellor Merkel traveled to Moscow March 8, becoming the first foreign leader to meet with Russian President-elect Medvedev since his election a week ago. During her one-day visit, she also met and held a joint press conference with President Putin. At a March 10 de-briefing for the Berlin diplomatic corps, the Chancellery reported that both leaders covered a broad range of issues, including NATO enlargement, missile defense, Kosovo, the Baltic Sea pipeline, and human rights. Merkel came away from her meetings convinced that Putin and Medvedev are a like-minded tandem, who will cooperate closely with one another. The Chancellery said it expects mostly continuity in Russian affairs, with Putin to focus on domestic policy and Medvedev foreign policy. In meetings with Merkel, both Putin and Medvedev expressed their interest in a strategic partnership with Germany and close relations with the EU. END SUMMARY

-----  
Chancellery expects continuity with Medvedev  
-----

¶2. (C) In a March 10 Chancellery debriefing on Merkel's weekend trip to Moscow, Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nikel said the visit had served the dual purpose of bidding farewell to Putin and gaining a first-hand impression of Medvedev. Merkel and Putin met first for about two hours, including lunch. She then met President-elect Medvedev for around 75 minutes. Merkel also gave a radio interview to an independent Russian station. Nikel described the atmosphere as open, businesslike, and transparent. In her meetings, Merkel came away with the impression that Putin and Medvedev are a like-minded tandem that coordinates closely. Nikel said the Chancellery thus expected "a lot of continuity" in Russian affairs. It appears that as PM, Putin will focus on domestic affairs, while President Medvedev will take care of foreign policy. In his meeting with Merkel, Medvedev said he was very interested in progress on the rule of law in Russia as well as close relations with Germany and the EU. Merkel invited Medvedev to come to Berlin.

-----  
Missile Defense  
-----

¶3. (C) According to Nikel, Putin once again made the case for a joint MD system with contributions from the U.S., Russia, and the EU. He claimed, however, that the U.S. had rejected such a proposal. Putin said that if MD components were installed in Poland and the Czech Republic, then a permanent Russian presence would be necessary in both countries. In addition, Russia would react by targeting the MD sites with its own missiles. Nikel saw an interest in the integration of Russia into MD plans. MD must increase Europe's stability, Nikel said. He was confident that for the NATO Bucharest Summit, a "reasonable communique" would emerge based on Defense Secretary Gates' proposals made at the

February NATO Defense Ministerial in Vilnius.

-----  
MAP for Ukraine and Georgia  
-----

¶4. (C) President Putin confirmed his intention to attend to upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest. While he argued strongly against extending the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest, Putin promised Merkel not to express the Russian position as forcefully as he did against MD at the February 2007 Munich Security Conference. Nikel told the diplomatic corps briefing (which included representatives from EU members states as well as Turkey) that Germany regards MAP as premature for both countries at Bucharest. (Comment: At her joint press conference with Putin, Merkel, in clear references to Ukraine and Georgia, mentioned the need for NATO membership to be supported by the population of the applicant country and for the applicant country to be "free from conflicts." End Comment.)

-----  
EU-Russia relations  
-----

¶5. (C) Nikel pointed out that both Putin and Medvedev expressed their interest in closer relations between Russia and the EU. It was in the interest of both sides to open negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) as soon as possible. Nikel said the Chancellery considers the energy charter to be a fundamental part of the new PCA discussions and will approach negotiations from a standpoint of "reciprocity" when it comes to energy questions. (Note: We understand the German Foreign Office

BERLIN 00000303 002 OF 002

would like to see the PCA on the agenda of the March 28-29 EU foreign ministerial. End Note.)

-----  
Baltic Sea pipeline  
-----

¶6. (C) Nikel said Chancellor Merkel promised Putin to discuss the pipeline route and other open questions with the Swedes on the margins of the March 13-14 EU Summit in Brussels.

-----  
Human rights  
-----

¶7. (C) Merkel raised the Mikhail Khodorkovsky case, calling for better medical treatment of the former Yukos CEO. She also hoped that Putin or Medvedev would consider a presidential pardon for Khodorkovsky. (Note: At his joint press conference with Merkel, Putin unexpectedly raised the possibility that Medvedev might consider pardoning Khodorkovsky. Merkel responded that Germany would welcome such a move. End Note.) Merkel also raised with Putin and Medvedev concerns about the treatment of NGOs in Russia. She cited the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation (affiliated with Merkel's CDU party) as one foreign organization that sees its work increasingly impeded by Russian authorities.  
KOENIG